

COPING WITH COVID-19

Teaching Infants At Home

Margaret Machara, Ph.D., CFLE, Professor, Department of Human Sciences
Contact: 615-963-5628, mmachara@tnstate.edu

Beatrice Harris, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Extension Specialist
Rita Fleming, M.S., Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist
Kane Reeves, Ed.D., Extension Agent & County Director

“How long can I talk to someone who doesn’t answer me before people think I’m crazy?” – mother of a 3 month old



While many babies used to spend time in childcare, parents who are sheltering at home may have more time with their infants. Although it can be stressful, this is also a great time to bond with your baby and start them on their path to learning.

WHAT INFANTS ARE LEARNING

The infant years are a time of discovery! So much happens and everything is new. Every taste, smell, sound, touch, and sight is a teachable moment. Providing a rich environment with lots of opportunities for interaction is key.



CREATING THE PERFECT SETUP

Many parents are working from home. The additional responsibility for a newborn, while trying to be productive in work can create a lot of stress. Creating a smart learning environment near you for your little one is key. Some key things to consider are:

- Create multiple comfortable spots to alternate placement for your baby with blankets/pillows, bassinets, and bouncy seats. Switching positions and points of view will keep your baby entertained.
- Have toys handy that you can switch in and out as baby gets bored. Switch out toys that feel different, have different colors, and make different sounds.
- Have snacks and feeding supplies handy. A small cooler that you stock periodically will work well if you don't have a refrigerator close.
- Keep diapers, wipes and towels handy.



LEARNING ON THEIR OWN

While you will always want to be able to keep an eye on your baby, there is plenty learning they can do on their own while you work.

- Set up an area on the floor for your baby on a blanket and surrounded by a few toys that they haven't seen for a while.
- Sit your baby in a bouncy seat or under a jungle gym with hanging toys for them to reach for.
- Read work out loud to your baby with lots of expression. It doesn't matter the topic, they will love to hear your voice.
- Audible stories and music are great for babies to listen to while they play.
- Take a walk with your baby during work calls. Nature will be a great stimulus or your baby may nap.
- Make the most of naptimes. Have a plan for what you will work on while your baby sleeps.



LEARNING WITH YOU

When you have time, interaction with you is one of the most rewarding activities for babies. It may feel a bit silly at times, but will come naturally before long.

- Make eye contact and talk to your baby.
- Sing songs and make rhymes.
- Read your baby a book.
- Imitate the sounds that they make.
- Give your baby a massage. Touch is important.
- Take turns playing with the toys that they choose. Add on to their towers. Hug their dolls. Shake their rattle.

RESOURCES

Check out these resources for other ideas:

- www.zerotothree.org
- www.pbskids.org
- www.kidshealth.org

FINAL THOUGHTS

No parent is perfect in the best of times. Taking care of yourself IS taking care of your baby. So, go easy on yourself. Children flourish in a consistent environment; but that doesn't mean you have to be mistake free. It's the overall care that matters. Don't compare yourself to other parents. Do you! Most importantly, ask for help when you need it. Parents need support and real friends will not judge you for having tough moments.



For General Health Information: cdc.gov
TN COVID-19 Information: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>
TN Mental Health Hotline: 1-855-274-7471
TN Addiction and Recovery Hotline: 1-800-889-9789

TSU-20-0089-(B)-16e-13520 - Tennessee State University does not discriminate against students, employees, or applicants for admission or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, age, status as a protected veteran, genetic information, or any other legally protected class with respect to all employment, programs and activities sponsored by Tennessee State University. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Natasha Dowell, Office of Equity and Inclusion, ndowell1@tnstate.edu, 3500 John Merritt Blvd., General Services Building, Second Floor, Nashville, TN 37209, 615-963-7435. The Tennessee State University policy on nondiscrimination can be found at www.tnstate.edu/nondiscrimination